

Section 1 Introduction

The Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for the Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). The MPA includes the communities of Rockford, Loves Park, Machesney Park, Cherry Valley, Roscoe, New Milford, Belvidere, Caledonia, Poplar Grove, Timberlane, and the existing and planned urban portions of Winnebago and Boone Counties (See **Figure 1-1, Metropolitan Planning Area Setting**). The MPA contains over 280,000 people in an area of 326 square miles.

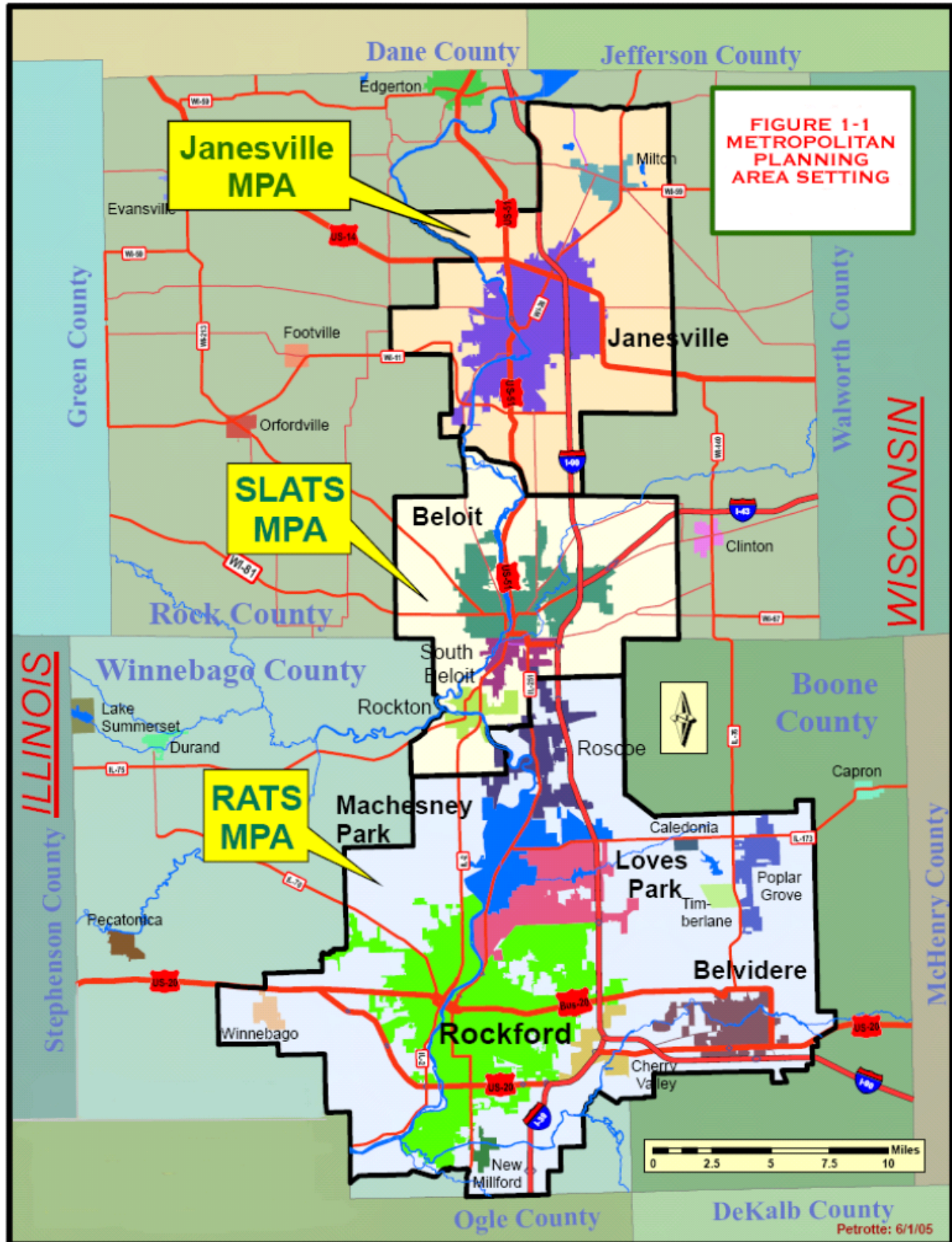
The purpose of this Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan (Plan) is to improve bicycle and pedestrian transportation networks in the Rockford MPA. This involves the creation and development of new facilities and expanding or retro-fitting existing facilities. Furthermore, these improvements involve a commitment to changing the transportation culture of the MPA. This cultural change entails recognition of the need to provide a variety of transportation choices; that is, creating an environment that encourages walking and bicycle riding as alternatives to vehicular transportation.

This document is a regional plan for a comprehensive system that will support and encourage walking and bicycling throughout the MPA. Transportation systems typically are designed to encourage vehicular travel. The result can be an uncomfortable and undesirable environment for people on foot or bicycle. The intent of this Plan is to promote facilities that are accessible to pedestrians and bicyclists in hopes of offering alternative transportation choices. Previous plans for the MPA have tended to focus on the improvement of recreational paths, but this Plan enhances the pedestrian and bicycle network for transportation purposes, as well as recreational.

Plan Coordination (Section 2)

This Plan promotes cooperation among RATS members, as well as other government agencies throughout the MPA. Agency cooperation is a necessary part of any regional plan. A regional plan encourages comprehensive development rather than piecemeal efforts. Individual government agencies and jurisdictions often create plans, regulations, and standards without consideration for initiatives outside their own areas. Consequently, an objective of a regional agency like RATS is to ensure coordination and cooperation among jurisdictions and agencies in the MPA.

This Plan serves as a guide for government agencies throughout the MPA. Implementation of pedestrian and bicycle systems is the responsibility of individual government agencies. Each jurisdiction should prepare their own non-motorized transportation plan that addresses the pedestrian and bicycle strategies expressed in this Plan.



Map based on Year 2000 Census & data from RATS, SLATS & Janesville MPOs

Accessibility, Connectivity, Mobility and Prioritization (Sections 3, 4, and 5)

This Plan provides recommendations for improving the non-motorized transportation system in the MPA. Emphasis is placed on improving accessibility to public transportation, making connections to the existing system, providing connections to destinations, and increasing mobility of all user groups.

The Plan specifically:

- Creates an inventory of the existing sidewalk and bikeway system. The inventory helps to identify gaps and missing sections of the pedestrian and bicycle network.
- Recommends bicycle and pedestrian connections to the Rockford Mass Transit District (RMTD) system. Links to public transportation are essential to encouraging multi-modal transportation options.
- Places an emphasis on connecting existing sidewalks and shared use paths/bicycle routes and lanes in the MPA.
- Promotes bicycling and walking as viable transportation alternatives. Connections between schools, jobs, and recreational activities are emphasized.
- Provides a prioritization of sidewalk and bicycle facilities for major arterials and collectors throughout the MPA.

Safety and Health (Section 6)

This Plan demonstrates that the addition of pedestrian and bicycle facilities will help in actively promoting healthy communities.

Regulations and Standards (Section 7, 8, 9, and 10)

Existing regulations and established standards for the MPA are described within this Plan for the purpose of providing recommendations for improving the non-motorized transportation system in the MPA. This Plan:

- Describes current traffic regulations and concerns for the addition of on-street bicycle facilities. Details are provided regarding existing regulations that limit pedestrian and bicyclist activity throughout the MPA.
- Recommends model development regulations and ordinances to promote and to encourage pedestrian and bicycle friendly growth. The current regulations within the MPA are used as a starting point.
- Encourages the construction of facilities according to recognized standards. Established standards can assure that facilities are planned, designed, and

constructed properly. Standards can be referenced in subdivision and zoning ordinances. Universal use of these standards throughout the MPA can ensure that facilities are built consistently throughout the region.

- Recommends a system for all types of users- experienced, recreational, young, old, and disabled. An efficient and accessible pedestrian and bicycle transportation network addresses the needs of all users. Design of all facilities should adhere to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and guidelines established by the Public Rights of Way Access Advisory Committee (PROWAAC).

Stakeholder & Public Involvement (Section 11)

Public participation is promoted within the transportation planning process. The public has intimate connections to where they live and a strong familiarity with existing conditions. Ultimately, they are the users and their input is essential to designing and developing a viable pedestrian and bicycle network.

Information gathered within this planning process should be shared with policy makers, local officials, coordinating agencies, and the public at-large. Active participation among all of these groups creates credibility for the planning process.

Public Finance (Section 12)

The implementation of the Pedestrian and Bicycle Plan will require a commitment of funds by government agencies within the MPA. This Plan provides brief descriptions of possible funding sources and indicates opportunities for collaboration for the construction of new facilities.